

Sheet Metal Forger Still On The Loose

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (AP) — Ten years, 25 states and an estimated \$150,000 worth of bum checks later, the "Swanton Sheet Metal Forger" is still on the loose. Police say they don't have a hint of who he is.

The forger first surfaced in 1961 in Goshen, Ind., and since has roamed from Ohio to California, as far north as Idaho and as far south as Florida.

His methods have varied, but one thing remains constant: the false payroll checks are always for \$89.25 and signed in ballpoint ink by J.S. Swanton of the fictitious Swanton Sheet Metal Co.

The forger has been described as 5 foot 5, 5 foot 9, about 35 years old, about 55, and weighing anywhere from 140 to 170.

Sgt. Clark Mercer of the Indiana State Police has been keeping track of the forger with pins on a large map of the United States and charts showing deviations in the forger's routine. He says the varied descriptions may indicate there is more than one man involved, but he is not certain.

His victims are mostly proprietors of rooming houses, paint stores, floor covering or hardware stores or florist and wig shops. He once passed a payroll check at a Bloomington, Ind., day nursery, ostensibly to enroll his children.

His first check was made out to Dean B. Ryan, but quickly changed to Harold Farley, a name kept throughout the 1960's. On Jan. 1, 1970, a check with a new name appeared, Charles Nelson.

The forger's method, according to Mercer, is simple. He usually appears in work clothes, selects a small purchase or wants to pay rent, finds he doesn't have enough cash and pulls out a payroll check.

His victims describe him as "quiet... smiling... friendly... nice."

"I kind of admire him" says bank president Richard L. Tykal, referring to the forger's deceptiveness. Tykal is president of the Lawrenceville National Bank, Lawrenceville. The bank's checks frequently have been used by the forger.

The forger has remained free of federal charges by cashing checks on banks in the same state in which he is operating.

Two State Troopers Shot, Seriously Hurt

WOODBIDGE, N.J. — Two New Jersey State Troopers were shot and seriously wounded as they questioned three occupants of a sedan registered in South Carolina on the New Jersey Turnpike here Sunday morning.

One of the three alleged gunmen was later shot to death by local policemen after the three had sought to hide in a nearby high school auditorium.

Trooper Gary McWhorter, 27, of Cranbury, suffered a bullet wound of the chest. Surgeons at Perth Amboy Hospital said they removed half of the trooper's left lung Sunday afternoon and retrieved the slug. The officer was placed under intensive care and was listed Sunday night as "satisfactory."

The second trooper, George W. Ayers, 28, of Chester, suffered a bullet wound of the spleen. Surgeons at the hospital removed the projectile Sunday afternoon and listed the patient as "serious."

State Police authorities late Sunday reconstructed the events that culminated in the killing of one suspect and the capture of his two alleged accomplices as follows:

At 8:30 a.m. in a light flow of traffic northbound on the turnpike near the point where it intersects the Garden State Parkway, McWhorter, who was patrolling alone, halted a 1965 Ford sedan bearing the South Carolina license plates and carrying three black men.

As the officer questioned the driver, the second trooper, Ayres, also patrolling alone, stopped to ascertain whether the first officer required help.

Lt. Gordon Hector, spokesman for the State Police, said a struggle broke out when the troopers spied a pistol on the floor under the driver's feet and sought to reach it.

The three alleged gunmen, identified as Lonnie Simmons, 21, John Edmunds, 23 and Gary Lamont Owens, 19, all of Columbia, S.C., then apparently fled the scene on foot, taking one of the officers' .38-caliber service revolver with them.

A silent alarm sounded when they broke into the high school. Police responded and in an exchange of gunfire Simmons was killed, officials said. The other two men surrendered.

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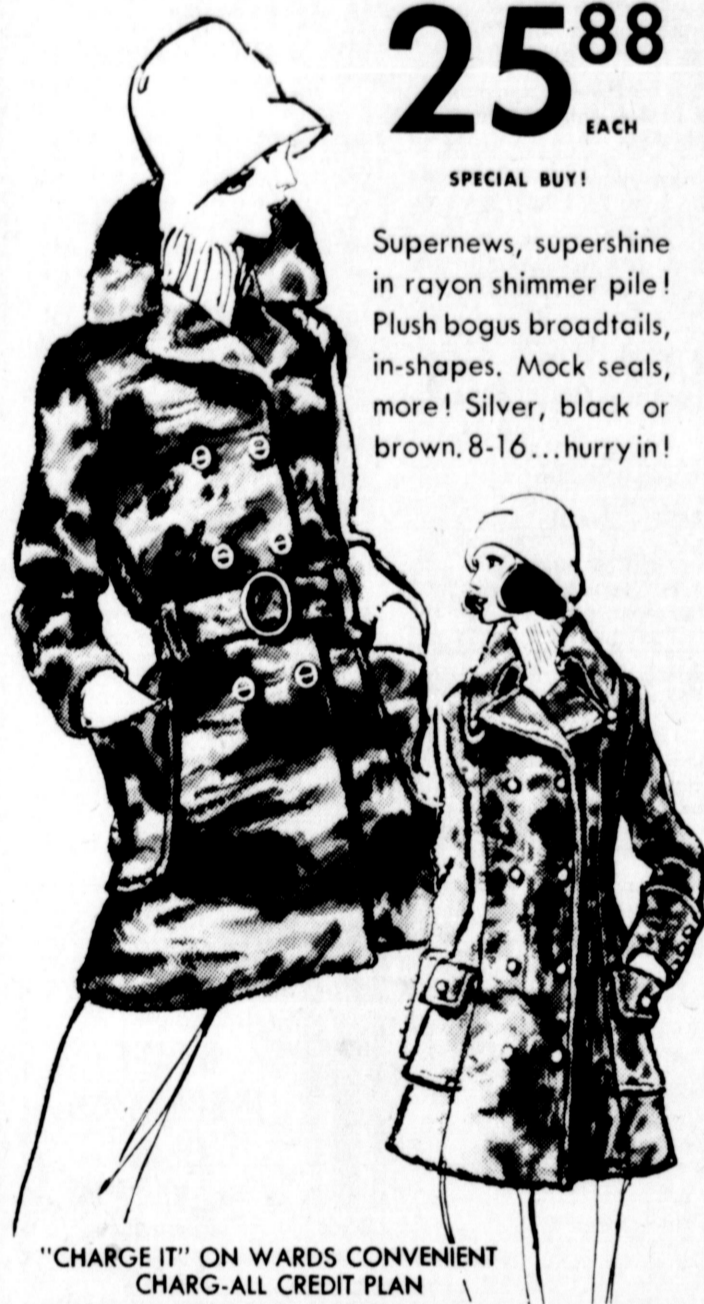
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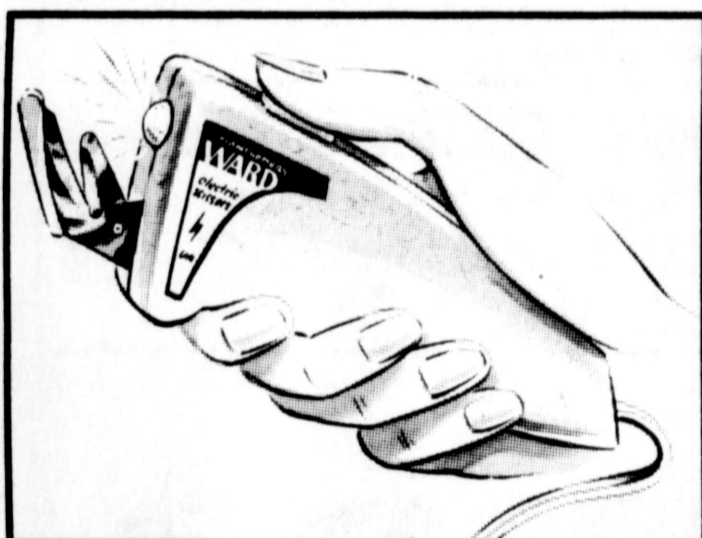
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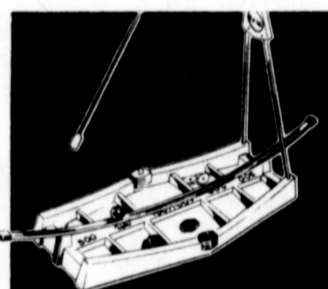
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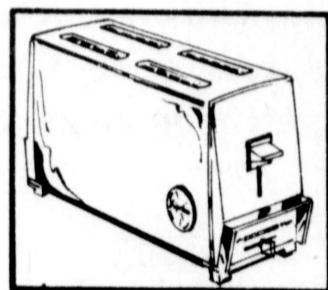
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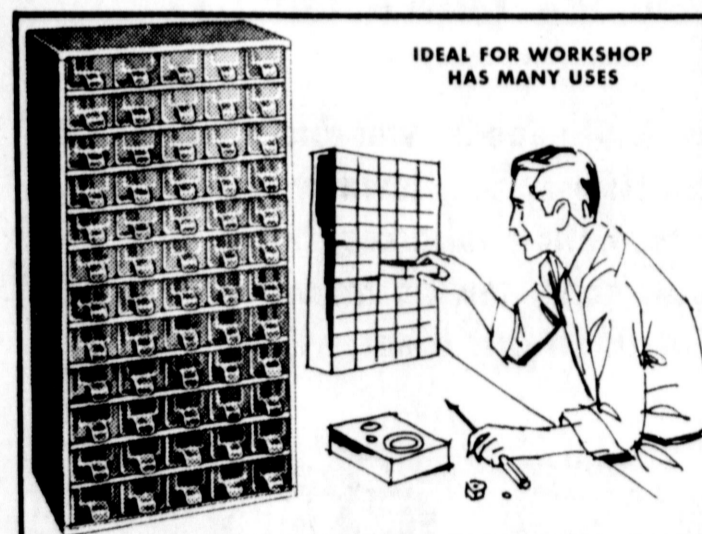
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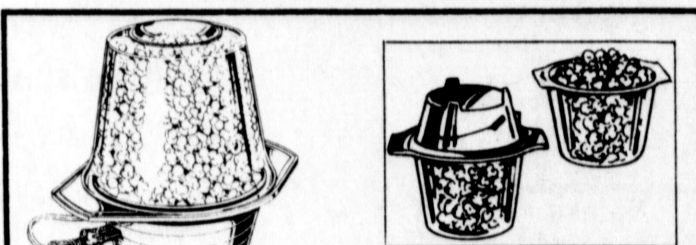
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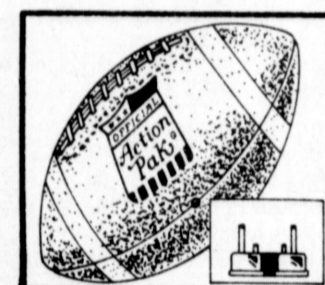
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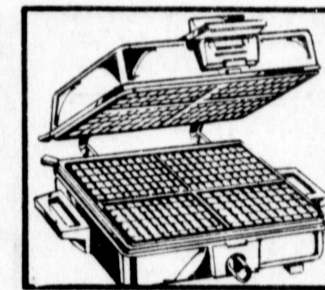
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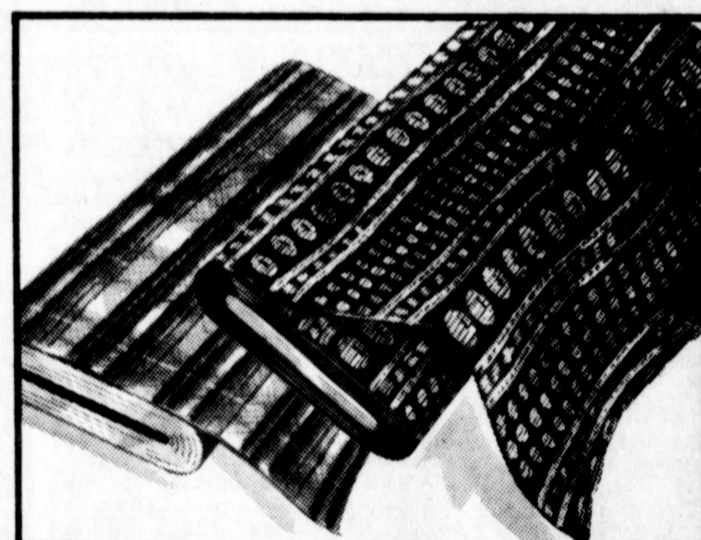
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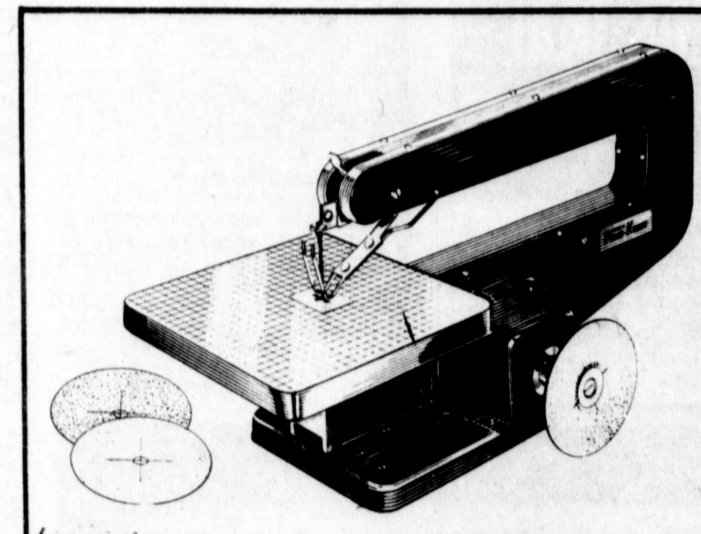
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